

You can't see your hand in front of your face.'

Duxbury Firefighters practice in smoky building

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With black smoke flowing out the windows of a soon-to-be demolished building on Washington Street, Duxbury fire fighters conducted three days of training exercises last week including a drill on rescuing the rescuers.

Fire Captain Rob Reardon said that Bayside Marine donated one of its buildings at 433 Washington Street for firefighter training. The building most recently housed the Sea School and used to be a pottery painting studio and long ago, a gas station. Reardon said the opportunity for the men and women in the fire department to participate in real life scenarios without worrying about damaging a building is invaluable. "The benefit to us is tremendous," Reardon said.



Firefighter/paramedic Mike Cardoza heads face first down a ladder only to spin around a second later and slide down in an emergency evacuation drill.

Over 33 Duxbury firefighters practiced breaching doors – knocking them down both inside and outside the building – hose handling, rescuing firefighters trapped in the building and emergency evacuations.

While firefighters learn these techniques at the fire academy, they seldom get a chance to use their training in action, Reardon said. When a team of firefighters enters a burning building, there is always another team waiting outside in case something goes wrong. To practice rescuing a lost firefighter inside the building, Reardon said they used two smoke machines and that "we smoked the building up to complete darkness so you can't see your hand in front of your face."

Then they attempted the rescue. "When you're in a building fire, you can't see," said Reardon. "You have zero visibility. You need to rely on your other senses, such as hearing and touch. The firefighters had to crawl on their hands and knees and do a quick systematic search of the building to find the individual and then drag him out. It's a very intensive process."

The firefighters also practiced emergency evacuations in which they came out a second floor window to a waiting ladder and started down the ladder headfirst only to turn around quickly and slide down to the ground.

Reardon said there is no time to go down the ladder feet first.

"The guys have to dive out and spin around and go down in this self-rescue maneuver. It's great to practice it," he said.

A short video clip of this emergency evacuation can be seen on the fire department's Twitter page.

The fire department had a busy week in addition to its practice last week. On Wednesday, November 25, firefighters responded to a roll-over car accident at Winter Street and Route 53 – the site of a future roundabout designed to reduce bad accidents. Reardon said that two people were transported to area hospitals but neither had serious injuries.

On Thanksgiving, fire trucks came to what was called in as a chimney fire on Washington Street, but that turned out to be just sparks coming out of a chimney. However, that same day they responded to a motor vehicle accident on Autumn Avenue in which a car hit a tree. Two people were transported to the hospital.



Bayside Marine's building at 433 Washington Street was transformed into a smoke-filled practice arena for Duxbury firefighters last week who performed evacuation and rescue drills.

Photos by Duxbury Fire Department Twitter